

Fire in the Shenandoah, May 1862

Introduction

The Shenandoah Valley is a picturesque and fertile farming region, bounded by the Allegheny Mountains to the west and the Blue Ridge Mountains to the East. It runs from South West to North East, and is divided down the middle by its own range, the Massanutten mountains. In 1862 possession of the valley offered advantages to both North and South. For the Confederacy the valley was a rich source of supplies, especially of grain. Also Harpers Ferry, at its north east tip, was only a short distance from Washington DC and a potential jump off point for invading the North. For the Union, possession of the valley could deny the vital food supplies to the Confederate army, cut the railroad from Richmond to Tennessee and threaten Richmond from the West.

The campaign began in late February 1862. The first phase saw an Jackson making a serious nuisance of himself against the Federals despite his inferior numbers. Now he has been reinforced and a new stage is about to begin. (Please note that while the troops in our campaign are based on historical orders of battle, the command structure and timings have been adapted to allow a 4 player game).

Common rules

The Map

The map is of the Shenandoah Valley, overlaid with boxes connected by a road net. (NB the graph paper in the background has no bearing on play). All units occupy boxes and move between them along the road net. There are four types of road: Pike, Road, Track and Railroad. Most boxes are clear terrain but some have a river along one or more sides (blue shading) and others have good defensive terrain (brown shading). Boxes surrounded by mountains are considered good defensive terrain. If a force enters a box across a river or defensive terrain, the defender will have a terrain advantage.

Infantry units must end an impulse in a box. Cavalry units may end an impulse either in a box or on a road, 'observing' a box (this allows cavalry to shadow enemy forces without initiating combat.)

Units

Each army consists of infantry and cavalry units. One Infantry unit represents a brigade of about 1,500-2,000 men with attached artillery.

One cavalry unit represents a small scouting force. Numbers are not the only factor here: an experienced, well-led cavalry unit will have more units available for scouting than an inexperienced one.

Every unit begins with a starting strength that can be reduced by combat and attrition. It can also acquire fatigue from forced marching, which will reduce its strength temporarily until it has had time to recover.

The turn

One turn consists of 3 impulses. For reporting purposes, one impulse is called a day. Turns are resolved simultaneously by the umpire. If the circumstances require it, for example an encounter with one or more players present, the umpire may contact a player mid-turn to request interim instructions.

Orders

Each player submits orders at the start of each turn. You must provide an order for each of the 3 impulses. A unit without orders will stand in place.

Orders can be:

- Move. Infantry and artillery may move from one named box to another along a connecting road or railroad (while respecting the maximum permitted limit for the road type). Cavalry may move up to two boxes in an impulse.

- Rest
- Special (this could be to destroy or repair a railroad, build or demolish a bridge, dig entrenchments or even burn down the town!)

Movement and stacking

Space: Infantry may only begin or end an impulse in one of the boxes on the map. You may have as many units together in one box as you wish.

Roads: Every connecting road has a maximum capacity of units that can travel along it in one impulse. The maximum number of infantry units that can move along a connection in one impulse are:

Turnpike (double line with red centre): 4 units

Road (single line): 2 units

Track (dotted line): 1 unit

Railroad (hashed line): unlimited units as long as railroad is friendly. If it belongs to the enemy, it counts as a road.

NB Cavalry does not count towards this limit. Thus, in one impulse, you could send 2 infantry units plus any number of cavalry units along a road.

A unit may move in every impulse but this could cause fatigue and attrition. Also, as there is a limit to the number of units that can use a road in an impulse, it will take two or more impulses for a large army to move from one box to the next.

(Example: a force of 3 infantry units wants to move along a road from one box to another. As only two units can use a road in one impulse, it would take two impulses for the whole force to end the turn together in the destination box. The order might read:

1st unit: move from Staunton to Harrisburg; rest; rest

2nd unit: move from Staunton to Harrisburg; rest; rest

3rd unit: rest; move from Staunton to Harrisburg; rest)

To recap: it is possible to move up to three times in a turn but this is likely to result in a unit becoming fatigued. Also, if a large force moves fast using roads or tracks, it is likely to end the turn strung out between more than one box.

Supply

Each army has a base from which it draws supplies. This is set out in the player briefing. Every unit in the army must be able to trace an uninterrupted path back to its supply base. If this path is interrupted, there will be penalties to the unit(s) that is out of supply. How severe will depend on how big the affected force is and how long it remains out of supply.

Encountering the enemy

If you enter a box containing enemy troops there will be an encounter. Cavalry on its own will retreat from moving enemy units if outnumbered, unless specifically ordered to stand and fight. Other troops will act in line with any prior instructions from their commander: to stand and fight; conduct a fighting withdrawal or attempt to retreat without fighting.

If you, the player character, are present at the encounter, you will be given information about the situation and asked for your orders. If you are not present at the encounter, you will receive a report afterwards of how it went.

Terrain

Some boxes have either a blue or a brown shading along one or more side, representing either a river or difficult ground. If you occupy one of these boxes and the enemy enters the box across a shaded side, you will receive advantages in the combat.

Boxes in the mountains at the left or right side of the map contain difficult ground that is generally favourable to the defender. Boxes in the valley are open terrain, except where a side is shaded brown or blue as noted above.

If infantry is present in a box for some time it can prepare the ground, which will be an advantage in battle. To prepare the ground, a unit must spend a full turn (three impulses) doing so. It can start this in one turn and finish in the next. Note these are not like the trenches developed later in the war, but are light fieldworks. There is no benefit to spending more than three impulses preparing ground.

Scouting and screening

Cavalry's greatest use is to scout ahead and to screen your army from enemy attention. If Cavalry on its own enters a box containing only enemy infantry, it will retire to the road along which it advanced and continue to observe the enemy. If there is enemy cavalry in the box there will be a skirmish. If your cavalry win this skirmish it can report to you all the troops that are in the box. If it loses or the skirmish is inconclusive, it will retire back one box and will only report that it has encountered enemy cavalry.

You are permitted to ask the local civilian population what they know about enemy movements. Note that the population are mostly pro-Confederate so their intelligence might be more reliable when dealing with rebels.

See individual player briefings for the additional information you need to know.